

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: ELAB, GH
SUBJECT: LABOR UNREST CONTINUES

REF: ACCRA 8125

1. ACCRA PRESS DECEMBER 14 GAVE FRONT PAGE COVERAGE TO DOCKWORKERS STRIKE IN GHANA'S TWO PORTS, TEMA AND TAKORADI. STRIKE BEGAN IN TAKORADI DECEMBER 10 WHEN DOCKERS STOPPED WORK TO PROTEST ARREST OF MARITIME AND DOCKWORKERS PRESIDENT, J.R. BAIDEN. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNT, ARREST OF BAIDEN ON CHARGES OF EMBEZZLING UNION FUNDS DENIED BY POLICE SOURCES. TRADES UNION CONGRESS SOURCES CLAIMED NO KNOWLEDGE OF EVENTS. DECEMBER 15 PRESS CONFIRMED THAT BAIDEN HAD INDEED BEEN ARRESTED, BUT WAS RELEASED DECEMBER 13 AND SPOKE TO STRIKERS IN TEMA FOLLOWING DAY, URGING THEM TO RETURN TO WORK. BAIDEN DENIED CHARGES OF EMBEZZLEMENT, AS "CALCULATED TO TARNISH THE REPUTATION AND LEADERSHIP OF THE UNION."

2. DOCKERS RETURNED TO WORK DECEMBER 15 IN TEMA, AND WERE EXPECTED TO BEGIN WORK IN TAKORADI FOLLOWING
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DAY. DURING STRIKE, PRESS REPORTED 19 SHIPS WERE WAITING IN HARBOR AND OUTSIDE AT TEMA, WHILE 8 VESSELS WERE WAITING AT TAKORADI.

3. DECEMBER 16 PRESS REPORTED WORKERS (ACCOUNTS RANGE FROM 400 - 2,500) AT MANKOADZE FISHEREIES AND

STAR-KIST INTERNATIONAL LOCKED OUT BECAUSE OF THEIR STRIKE ACTION. BOTH FIRMS ARE FISHING OPERATIONS IN PORT OF TEMA. STAR-KIST IS U.S. SUBSIDIARY THAT USES TEMA AS BASE FOR TRANS-SHIPPING TUNA TO CANNERIES IN U.S. ACCORDING TO PRESS, MANAGEMENT DID NOT APPROVE STRIKE AND REPORTEDLY HOLDS THAT WORKERS HAD NO GRIEVANCE. MANKOADZE INSISTING THAT WORKERS RE-APPLY OR BE FIRED.

4. TRADES UNION CONGRESS OFFICIAL CONFIRMED THAT HIS ORGANIZATION NOT INFORMED OF CHARGES AGAINST BAIDEN UNTIL DAY AFTER HIS ARREST. HE BELIEVES THAT CHARGES MAY STEM FROM RECENT DISPUTE IN TAKORADI BETWEEN BAIDEN'S UNION AND NATIONAL UNION OF SEAMEN. UNLIKE OTHER RECENT LABOR DISPUTES, REFTEL, MARITIME AND DOCKWORKERS STRIKE SEEMS DUE MORE TO WORKERS VOLATILITY AND INDISCIPLINE THAN TO DISSATISFACTION WITH WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS. WHATEVER THE OUTCOME OF THE CHARGES AGAINST BAIDEN, THE GOG'S HANDLING OF THE AFFAIR SEEMS CERTAIN TO WORSEN RELATIONS WITH TUC LEADERSHIP AS WELL AS WORKERS. SMITH

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